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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0303
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T RABAT 000533

NOFORN

NEA FOR SE MITCHELL, IPA AND MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2029
TAGS: PREL PGOV KPAL XF EAID MO
SUBJECT: MOROCCO STILL ENGAGED WITH ISRAEL BUT SEES
NETANYAHU SPEECH AS A SHUFFLE NOT A STEP

REF: A. STATE 62909
 B. RABAT 484

Classified By: Polcouns Craig Karp for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Polcouns met with Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General of Bilateral Affairs Mohammed Azaroual on June 19th to urge (per ref. A) Morocco to work in the coming Arab League Ministerial to promote peace efforts and to consider Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent speech a positive step. Azaroual was unenthusiastic about the request, stating that in light of the language used in Netanyahu's speech, he "would be stupid" to present this to his Arab partners, especially Saudi Arabia. Though he praised President Obama's speech in Cairo as an opportunity for greater cooperation on the Middle East peace issue, he remained convinced that Israel must take the first step. With frankness characteristic of our close relationship, he confided that many of his Arab League colleagues had been critical of President Obama's speech, wanting to see actions not words. Polcouns stressed the importance of the new and transparent approach embodied in the President's speech.

¶2. (S/NF) Azaroual was particularly nonplused at the U.S. characterization of Netanyahu's speech as "a step forward" in the peace process. To underscore his skepticism, Azaroual stood up and physically took a step forward. Departing from his normally open but diplomatic style, he then showed how he saw Netanyahu's "step forward," by dancing and shuffling sideways and backwards. He stated that the Moroccan MFA is ready to work for the peace process, but underscored that Israel must take a real first step before it can convince other Arab partners to join. He reminded Polcouns, however, that Morocco has consistently worked for peace and has been the most forward leaning Arab State. Most recently he received the Israeli MFA North Africa chief to discuss "bilateral issues" (ref. B) with more high level talks in the works. He had also recently conferred by phone, also on "bilateral issues," with a senior member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee.

¶3. (C) Azaroual, recalling fruitful discussions in April here with SE Mitchell, was eager to be updated on Mitchell's impressions following the SE's recent consultations. Moroccan officials, likely led by FM Fassi Fihri and including Azaroual, will be in Trieste for the Quartet meeting on June 26. We recommend that the U.S. delegation consider holding a sidebar meeting with the Moroccan delegation to discuss the Middle East and the potential Moroccan role.

¶4. (C) On a separate issue, Azaroual, a former Ambassador in Teheran, expected no give from Khamenei, following the latter's tough talk earlier in the day.

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http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Moro_cco

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